



**ARO17: The demise of Tigh Caol,  
an eighteenth century drovers' inn**  
by Donald Adamson and Warren Bailie

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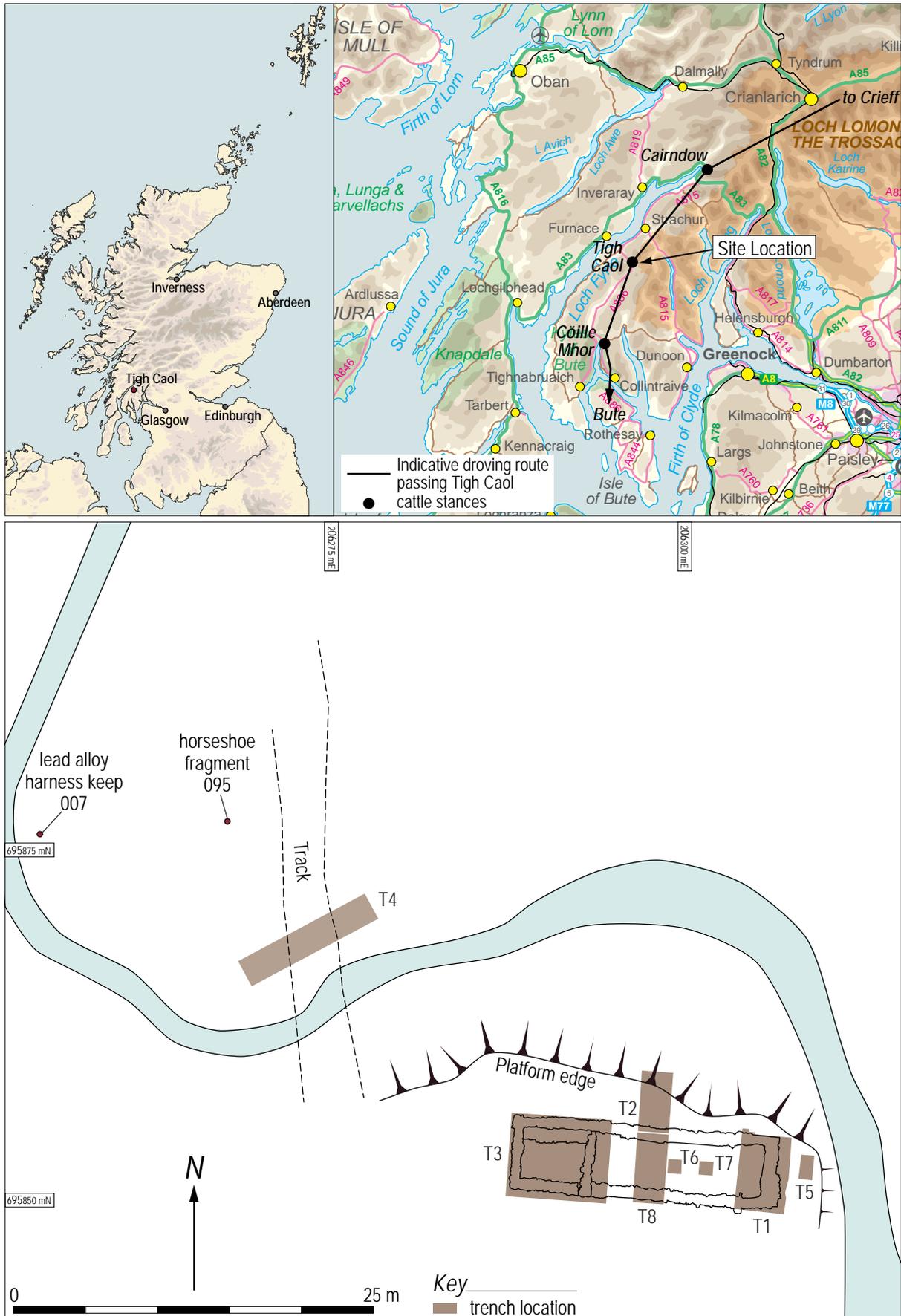
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Figure 1: Site location and showing the indicative droving route passing Tigh Caol.

## Abstract

*An archaeological excavation was carried out by GUARD Archaeology Ltd of an eighteenth-nineteenth century Drovers' Inn, Tigh Caol, Strathlachan, Argyll on behalf of Dr Donald Adamson. The excavations took place from 26 May to 6 June 2014 with support from Strachur and District Local History Society and with the assistance of students from the University of Glasgow and two metal detectorists. There were a total of 37 volunteers and 100 local school children involved throughout the 12 day excavation. The investigations involved the hand excavation of seven trenches across the building footprint and one trench over the drovers' track. The investigations established that the building originally consisted of one long room with a later addition of a partition wall towards the west end. Two hearths were also located, one roughly defined hollow lay central to the long axis of the original building and the other more formal hearth setting towards its west end.*

*A trench across the drovers' track confirmed the presence of a track or surface but also revealed a large area of in situ burning below the position of the track. This was identified as the burnt remains of birch logs which still had their bark on when laid on bare ground. A charcoal sample from this deposit dated to 1216 - 1284 cal AD. The wood may be interpreted as a 'corduroy' track whereby rows of wood, bedded with ash and sand, is used to consolidate a route often taking heavy traffic particularly through poorly drained ground.*

*The investigations recovered green and clear glass bottle and vessel shards, eighteenth / nineteenth century pottery sherds, unidentified iron objects, a pewter harness keep with hour-glass design, SF 007, a brass musket trigger guard SF 091, a possible late seventeenth- early eighteenth century horseshoe fragment SF 095, multiple fire-flints, animal bone fragments, one coarse stone tool SF 080 and a George II coin dated 1727-1760.*

## Introduction

An archaeological excavation was undertaken under the direction of Warren Bailie, GUARD Archaeology Limited at Tigh Caol, between 26 May and 6 June 2014. This was conducted on behalf of Dr. Donald Adamson who had recently completed a PhD, which included a study of

droving routes in the Scottish Highlands (2014). The site of Tigh Caol was highlighted by a retired local forester, crofter and ghillie Tom Hill, and it became apparent that the building lay adjacent to a surmised droving route. The structure was initially recorded using a plane table survey by Strachur and District Local History Society with assistance from Donald Adamson and Kevin Grant, PhD student at the University of Glasgow.

The site is located at NGR: NS 06301 95853, just west of the A886, and 2.5 km south-east of Newton, Argyll (Figure 1). The site lies on the periphery of a large area of coniferous forestry on land owned by Enga Ltd., and managed by Aitchesse Ltd. The underlying geology consists of the Argyll Group - pelite, semipelite and psammite; amtamorphic series, which was formed c. 542 to 1000 million years ago. The superficial geology consists of Quaternary Period till, formed during Ice Age conditions ([www.bgs.co.uk](http://www.bgs.co.uk)).

## Background to the site



Plate 1: Overall view of Tigh Caol with the trench over the drovers' track. From the west.

The proposed area of investigation consisted of 'the ruins of what was formerly an inn' in the parish of Kilmodan near Strachur, according to the entry for *Tigh Caol* in the Ordnance Survey Name Book (1870), (Canmore ID: 153843; Site No.: NS09NE 5; WoSAS Pin: 45423). The remains of the inn lie on a slightly raised platform on the inside of a meander of a burn (Plate 1) which flows north-west to eventually feed into the Strathlachan River (Figure 1). To the south-east the burn flows below the current A886 and the former line of the road built by Telford in 1804-11. A bridge, noted as the 'Witches Bridge', carries Telford's road over the burn just east of the A886. North of this bridge and along the main road edge lies a large quartzite glacial erratic known as *the*

'*Cailleach Glas*' (grey haired witch or old woman).

It is thought that Tigh Caol may have operated as an inn until the Telford engineered road of 1804-11 passed it by. The Tigh Caol building was roofless on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of the area published in 1870 (surveyed 1865) but was not noted on the Second Edition Ordnance Survey map published in 1900 (surveyed 1889). The building is also associated by oral history with a cattle stance (T. Hill pers. comm.) and a trackway, which was in existence from at least 1710 (McLean 2001, 169). This is not surprising given the natural amphitheatre around the inn, the existence of the trackway running through that bowl, an ample water supply, the near residence of the great cattle droving dynasty of the Fletchers at Dunans, and the association with the '*Cailleach Glas*' boulder. The *Cailleach* is an archaic female figure, frequently linked with cattle in Gaelic cosmological tradition, and whose stones are found throughout the Highlands and Ireland (Newton 2009, 227-230).

The name of *Tigh Caol* (House of the Narrow Glen) is linked to the upland valley the Caol Glen (Narrow Glen) in which it lies, and it suggests that this building may have had some importance when in use. This fits with its noted purpose as the inn is '*the*' building of this valley rather than '*a*' building in the valley. The inn would have offered welcome shelter and an opportunity to rest on an arduous drove to markets, especially as it lies in a pass between Glendaruel and the low lying land along Loch Fyne, to the south of Strachur (Figure 1).

The building of Telford's parallel road in the early nineteenth century, although only a couple of hundred metres away, probably led to the demise of the inn. Traffic, including the increased use of wagons and carriages, moved faster on the generally improved road surface and gradient, and it therefore reduced the need for travellers, drovers and livestock to stop for rest. The Highland Clearances of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries may have been a catalyst in the improvement of transport and trade networks in Highland Scotland at this time due to increased livestock trade and management.

## Droving route research

The thesis which led to the re-discovery of Tigh

Caol was a study of cattle and grain export out of the Scottish Highlands in the period before and during Improvement - broadly the seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries. It used historical archaeology (archaeological, documentary and cartographic research) to focus on the growth and implications of commercial practice in a predominately rural region. The evidence for the growth of the cattle trade is demonstrated in archaeological terms by drove roads and associated structures such as cattle stances, enclosures, bothies and inns. The thesis studied two droving routes: one is through central Sutherland and the other starts in the Isle of Bute and moves through the Cowal peninsula towards Crieff and the markets of the Scottish Lowlands (Figure 1).

Access was obtained to an archive (in this case, that of the Stuarts of Bute at Mount Stuart) which had records relating to the cattle trade going back to the seventeenth century. The research therefore set out to trace the movement of the cattle exported from Bute, via swimming the Kyle of Bute at Colintrave, as they moved towards the distant markets in large cattle droves. Colintrave is derived from the Gaelic, *Caol-an-t-snaimh*, the narrows (*caol*) of the swimming (*snaimh*), and the animals doing the swimming were black cattle coming off, or onto, the island of Bute (Markus 2012, 432).

It was in this context that *Tigh Caol* was identified. It is a couple of days droving from Colintrave, and one day from a complex of animal enclosures at Coille Mhor, next to the former Campbell castle at Auchinbreck. Beyond Tigh Caol, heading northwards, there is a cattle stance at Cairndow, which was still in use in 1914. From there, cattle heading for the great cattle tryst or market, held annually at Crieff went via the pass of the Larig Arnan to a stance at Inverarnan, at the north end of Loch Lomond where the hotel is still known as 'The Drovers'. The Bute cattle were by no means the only cattle on this route, with substantial Campbell, Lamont and Fletcher estates in southern and central Cowal also using the route. Equally, it is apparent that the trackway past the site was an ancient one, and was well used by all sorts of travellers besides cattle drovers (McLean 2001, 169). Indeed, McLean notes the repair of the trackway near Tigh Caol in 1710, with materials being provided by the Argyllshire Commissioners of Supply.

## The excavation

The excavation took place over twelve days and involved Strachur and District Local History Society with the assistance of five students from the University of Glasgow and two metal detectorists, Jim Conquer and Les Hannah. A total of 37 volunteers and 100 local school children took part. From the excavations 18 sherds of pottery, 88 shards of glass, a quantity of fire-flints, a stone object, several metal objects and samples of key deposits were recovered for further analyses.

The first phase of the Tigh Caol building was the construction of a long-house in dry-stone masonry on an east/west axis on the river terrace. The dimensions of the structure are 19.6 m by 5.2 m externally and 17.55 m by 3.45 m internally (Figure 2). The south, west and north walls are all c. 0.85 m thick with the east gable wall averaging 1.2 m in thickness. The walls were all constructed with two roughly coursed faces infilled with irregularly shaped stone. The stone was sourced from the burn edge where quartzite, schist and granite (in order of frequency) were all readily available in many shapes and sizes, and with varying levels of erosion and discolouration from the iron-rich burn and peat-rich soils.



Plate 2: Central hearth 046 with some of wall collapse 006 in situ.

The beaten floor of the building was created by using silts and fine gravels, probably also from the burn edge. There were two hearths set into the floor: central to the overall structure was a circular hearth defined by rough stones (Plate 2), and an angular setting of flat stones was identified as the other towards the west gable end. A stone bench was built alongside the angular hearth and against the west gable and north walls. Most of the floor and hearth deposits (raked-out ashes etc.) had accumulated against the west gable wall and bench (Figure 3) (Plate 3), with some of

the latter extending up to 3 m to the east towards the centre of the structure. An internal partition wall was later inserted 1.2 m east of western hearth edge, which confined the hearth waste within a newly defined room. Two further, thin hearth layers accumulated against this partition wall prior to the inn being abandoned. The western room had internal dimensions of 3.6 m by 4.4 m which was reduced to 2.6 m in width when considering the impact the bench had on the floor space. Collapse of the walls and stone robbing occurred periodically after the building went out of use, and soil and vegetation build-up created a thick dense turf layer over the structure that effectively preserved Tigh Caol as it was found in 2014.



Plate 3: Hearth 012 (left) in Room 1 showing layers of ash deposits in the section.

One excavation trench was aligned perpendicularly across the line of the drovers' road on the east side of the burn to the north of the inn (Plate 4). Here there were hollowed out tracks following the line of the road. However, below the compacted sands and silts, which formed a surface there was a layer of charred wood which appeared to be burnt in situ. Below this layer there were others of discoloured, reddened sediment, possibly affected by direct heat and / or by leaching.



Plate 4: Showing Trench 4 in relationship to the Tigh Caol building across the burn, with dips for the track line also clearly visible. From the north-west.

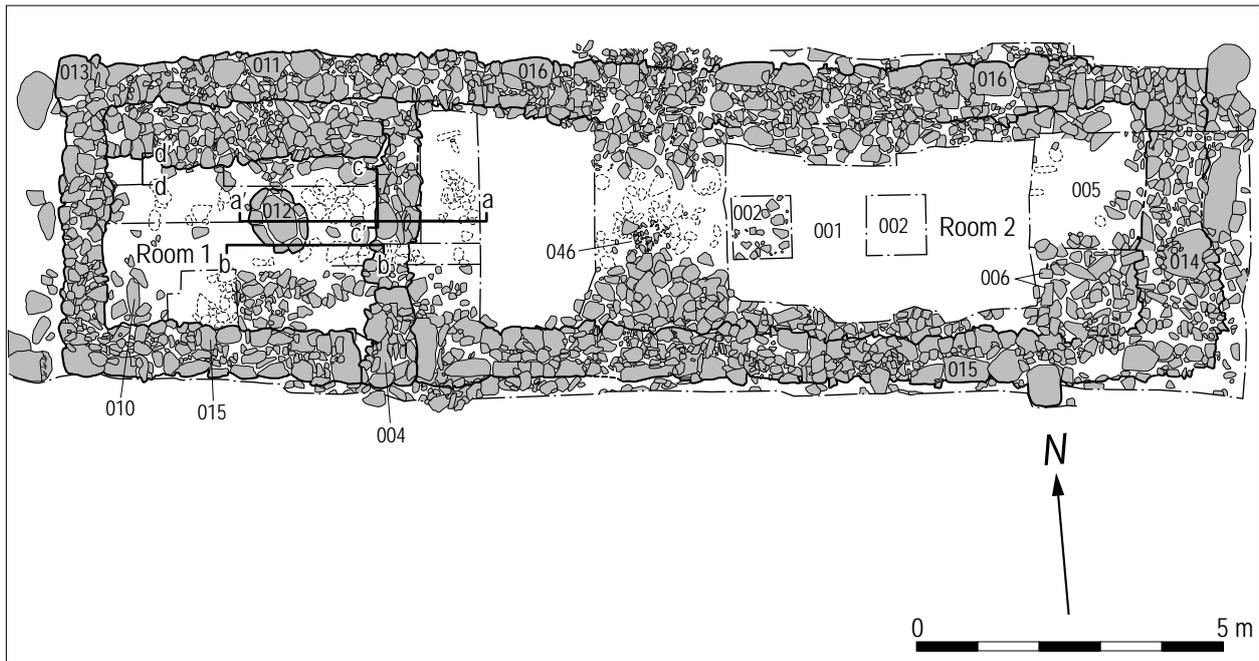


Figure 2: Overall plan of the Tigh Caol building.

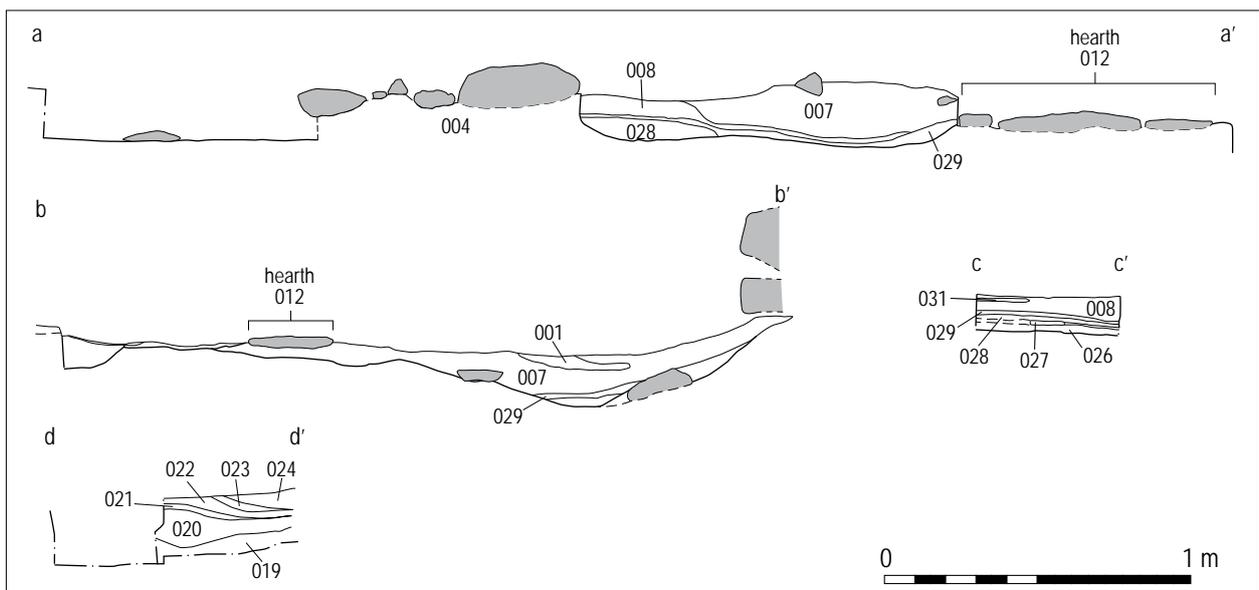


Figure 3: Sections across Room 1 deposits.

A layer of terram was laid over the exposed areas within the structure prior to backfilling to identify the extent of modern excavation in the future. In addition, a time capsule containing a list of volunteers, paper cuttings, recently issued stamps and coins, business cards, leaflets and drawings from those involved in the excavation was deposited in the lower excavated levels at the east gable end of Tigh Caol on 6 June 2014 before backfilling (Plate 5).



Plate 5: The position of the time capsule prior to backfilling.

## Specialist Reports

### Charcoal

Susan Ramsay

The excavations revealed that the building was originally one long room with at least two hearths. A further trench confirmed the presence of a drovers' track, which overlay a large patch of *in situ* burning (Baillie 2014).

Only one charcoal-rich context (036), from the drover's track was analysed for this report. The charcoal sample was examined using a binocular microscope at variable magnifications of x4-x45 and an estimation of the total volume of carbonised material >4 mm was made. As charcoal was abundant, a percentage of the total charcoal >4 mm was identified, with the number of fragments of each taxon counted and weighed. The internal anatomical features of all charcoal fragments were identified at x200 magnification using the reflected light of a metallurgical microscope.

Significant quantities of carbonised material were recovered from sample 004, context 036, which lay beneath the track contexts. The charcoal was all identifiable as birch, with quantities of indeterminate bark also recorded. Although it was not possible to identify the bark to type, it is likely that it is also from birch and represents the burning of birch branches that still had the bark intact. It is not possible to determine categorically whether this carbonised material resulted from the burning of upstanding birch trees or from cut trunks/branches that had been placed on the ground. There was no evidence for burnt grass, or other herbaceous types and no evidence for very small birch twigs. This tends to suggest that the charcoal resulted from birch logs that had been placed on the ground and then burnt, rather than from burning of upstanding birch trees.

### Radiocarbon dating

A sample of the charred birch from the possible corduroy track was submitted to Scottish Universities Environmental Research Centre (SUERC) for radiocarbon dating. The charcoal produced the date of 768 ± 31 BP (GU35860: 1216 - 1284 cal AD at 2σ) placing it in the medieval period (ScARF 2012).

## Pottery

Bob Will

### Introduction

Eighteen sherds (161.4 g) of glazed pottery were recovered from the archaeological investigations at Tigh Caol and represent material from the post-medieval to modern period. All the sherds were examined, weighed and recorded according to guidelines and standards produced by the Medieval Pottery Research Group (MPRG 1998 and 2001). No scientific analysis has been undertaken.

### Scottish post-medieval reduced ware

Four sherds of Scottish post-medieval reduced ware pottery were recovered and appear to be from jugs. Two of the sherds (SF 103) join and are from the main body of the vessel at the point where the strap handle joins. The join for the handle has a few thumb marks to indicate the smoothing over of the join where the handle was attached to the body but there is no impression on the inside. The handle itself is quite small for the size of the jug and has broken close to the body, but it would have had a vertical groove up its middle. These sherds have an abraded dark brown glaze rather than the more typical green glaze and the fabric is pale grey rather than dark grey or black. One of the sherds (SF 87) has a predominantly oxidised orange/red coloured fabric. Oxidised versions of these wares are quite common and reflect different firing conditions in the kilns. The remaining sherd of this ware (SF 122) has glaze internally as well as an abraded spot of glaze externally. Glaze on the inside of vessels tends to suggest that this sherd was from a bowl or possibly a cooking pot.

These fabric types were first classified at Stirling Castle (Haggarty 1980) and the pottery dates from the late fifteenth to eighteenth centuries. The only published kiln site for these wares in Scotland is at Throsk on the banks of the Forth to the east of Stirling (Caldwell and Dean 1992) but other kiln sites making similar vessels are likely to have been in operation at other sites across Scotland. Historical research at Throsk has uncovered details about the potters and their families and links to other parts of Scotland (Harrison 2012). It has been suggested that it was the draining of the carse that led to the development of pottery

production as the river valley clays became more easily accessible (Haggarty and Lawson 2013). Scottish post-medieval reduced wares tend to be thick-walled, the fabric is usually heavily reduced to grey or black with few inclusions, and it has a thick dark green glaze. The best range of vessels so far recovered comes from Throsk and Stirling Castle where platters, bowls, skillets, fish dishes and money boxes or *pirlie pigs*, as well as the more common jugs have been recovered. Many of these jugs are decorated with incised wavy lines round the shoulders of the vessels, but none of the sherds from Tigh Caol were decorated.

### 'Delft type' tin glazed white earthenware

Seven small sherds and fragments (15.7 g) of 'Delft type' tin glazed white earthenware were recovered. The sherds are all small with cracked or crazed glaze that is flaky or has been lost completely, leaving the white base pottery. Where it survives the glaze is a light blue colour with an unidentified hand painted line decoration in darker blue. One abraded sherd, possibly from the wide rim of a plate or shallow bowl, has a double line painted on the outer edge on the upper side and three lines on the underside (SF 20) while another small fragment of glaze has two lines painted on it (SF 84). Due to the similarity of the colour, decoration and condition it is likely that all the sherds and fragments are from the same vessel.

Tin glazed white earthenwares were produced in Britain from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and the first factory in Scotland was the Delftfield factory in Glasgow which operated from 1748 - 1823 (Kinghorn and Quail). Although the use of tin glaze was a major breakthrough in the production of mass-produced glazed dishes and tableware, it was relatively short lived as the development of 'pearlware' with a bluish glaze, and 'creamware' a lighter cream-coloured glaze, were developed in the 1760s, which ultimately led to the development of white earthenwares by the end of the century, which dominated the domestic market.

### White earthenwares

Two small sherds were recovered in white earthenware fabrics. SF 14 may actually be 'creamware' as it has a cream-coloured glaze and it could be from the foot-ring of a cup or small bowl. The other sherd (SF 111) has a white fabric

and clear glaze and is decorated with abraded blue and red hand-painting. Both these pottery types continued to be produced over a long period of time and probably represent vessels from the late eighteenth or nineteenth century.

### Red earthenwares

Five sherds, including two rim sherds, were recovered in red fabrics with a clear glaze (a clear glaze over a red fabric gives the effect of a brown glaze). Four of them also had applied yellow slip decoration. One of the sherds (SF 70) is very finely made with a slightly flared rim with a band of slip along the inside of it and decorative dots internally. This sherd may be from a cup or bowl. The other three sherds may be from the same vessel: a plate or bowl with a flared rim with yellow slip decoration running round it. The remaining sherd (SF 36) was a very finely made rim that was glazed on both sides possibly from the spout of a teapot, or similar type of vessel, and could be later eighteenth or nineteenth century in date.

Slip decorated red earthenwares tended to be made in small local potteries rather than large factories. The use of yellow or cream-coloured slip for decoration was carried on from the late medieval and post-medieval pottery traditions and would date to the eighteenth or early nineteenth century. Slip decorated wares are found throughout Britain although there has been little research undertaken on it in Scotland.

### Discussion

This small assemblage of eighteen sherds probably dates to the mid-eighteenth century and it is an interesting collection. It reflects a time of transition in pottery manufacture from the end of the medieval and post-medieval periods where small scale potteries largely supplied a local market, to the large industrial factories of the nineteenth century that exported pottery all over the world. Four sherds were recovered that reflect the main post-medieval type of wares, thick walled and green or brown glazed jugs and bowls that were found throughout the country and would mark the end of that type of pottery. While the seven sherds of tin glazed white earthenwares reflect the start of the industrial pottery factories. The Delftfield pottery in Glasgow was the first industrial pottery in Scotland and produced quite distinctive wares

with a brittle glaze that tended to flake off once broken, and which were decorated with hand-painted, usually floral designs. This factory was quite short-lived and was soon overtaken by the development of white earthenwares in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The development of white earthenwares had a similar effect on the production of red earthenwares, and in particular the slip decorated wares, which were largely replaced by the more decorative white earthenwares. Red earthenwares from that time onwards tended to be made in the larger factories for more utilitarian wares although the use of slip decoration did continue in a small way. The sherds may represent only seven or eight vessels, which is low considering the site was an inn, but then other materials such as leather, wood and horn were used for plates, mugs and drinking vessels.

### Coin

#### Donal Bateson

The extreme wear and corrosion on this coin unfortunately makes it difficult to give certain identification. However, it appears to be an eighteenth century Georgian copper halfpenny. It is probably an issue of George II (1727-1760)

rather than George III (1760-1820). The little detail visible might suggest there is a crowned harp on the reverse. This would indicate an Irish halfpenny which is not infrequently found in Scotland. If so, the obverse would bear the laureate bust of the king facing left with the inscription GEORGIUS II REX while the name HIBERNIA would occur on the reverse around the top of the harp with the date below. Such Irish halfpennies of George II were produced at the Tower Mint in London with the dates for most years between 1736 and 1753. They would have circulated until at least the end of the century.

### Flints

#### Torben Ballin

A total of 10 pieces of flint were found across the excavated areas (Figure 4, Table 1). The material is exotic to the area and is possibly reused ballast flint, which frequently has a soft cortex. Seven pieces have been identified as fire-flints, with the remainder being unused flakes or flake fragments. The used pieces generally display heavy wear from being struck against steel. Most of the flints were found in and around the western room of the building and were most likely associated with lighting fires on the hearth there.

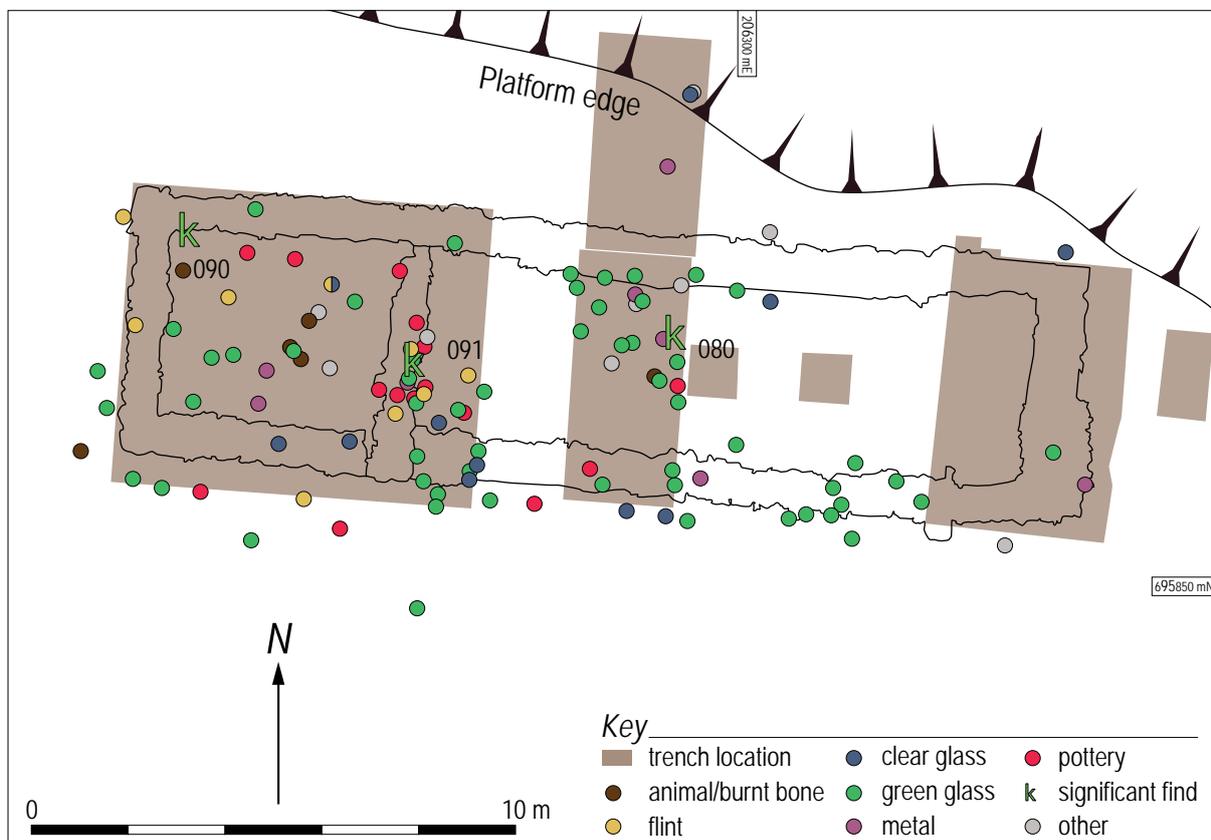


Figure 4: Finds distribution.

Table 1: Lithic assemblage.

| SF  | Description   |
|-----|---|
| 6   | Flint flake, heavily burnt  |
| 23  | Shaped ('core') fire-flint, struck along several edges, although mainly one edge  |
| 63  | Flake-based fire-flint, struck along most edges   |
| 66  | Hard-percussion flake   |
| 72  | Large flake-based fire-flint, notable wear from being struck along most of its circumference, apart from a short stretch distal left                  |
| 82  | Tiny flake-based fire-flint, with wear along most edges   |
| 86  | Medial-distal flake fragment  |
| 110 | Fragmented flake-based fire-flint with use-wear along one edge (due to the character of the flint it is difficult to say which end survives)          |
| 116 | Small, heavily battered fire-flint with wear on most edges - probably broke off a larger fire-flint, but then the edges of the break were also struck |
| 117 | Flake-based fire-flint with use-wear along most edges   |

## Stone

### Beverley Ballin Smith

SF 080, a stone artefact of banded, blond sandstone with iron staining was recovered in two fragments from topsoil in the western part of the larger of the two rooms at Tigh Caol.

The object is a relatively smooth and shaped bar, which tapers towards its butt end and expands at its top. The butt is slightly notched and rough due to the grain of the sandstone, but also because it may have been used as a tool for hammering or for gentle pecking. One side of the object is very smooth, possibly through wear but other notches and indentations may be natural. The top end indicates that the piece was wider and has been notched, cut and smoothed down to create the tapering bar. The expansion at the top of the bar suggests that it was part of a larger tool, possibly a handled bowl or lamp, with the bar being a handle. The weathering of the sandstone has revealed faults within the stone, which were a cause of its breakage.

There is a possibility that this was a handle to a shallow bowl, not unlike the handled lamps of the Norse and early medieval periods, for example, found in Shetland in steatite (Forster 2009, 65 Fig 8.8) (Figure 5). In more recent times this type of light became the iron *crusie* or *collie* lamp, an open (hanging) lamp with rush wicks and fat or tallow for fuel (Fenton 1978, 147). The Tigh Caol

example, if it was a lamp was similar to the *crusie* but would have been placed on a shelf to give maximum light. Its maximum length is 130 mm, maximum width 80 mm, maximum thickness 60 mm, and its weight is 616 g. Its date is unknown but the pieces of broken handle may imply an earlier use for the building contemporary with the track dated to the thirteenth century.

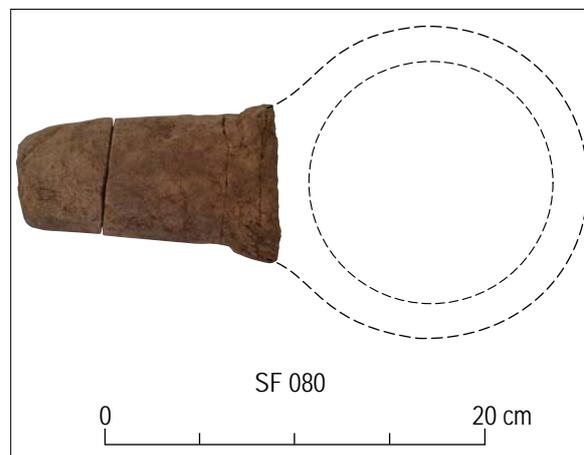


Figure 5: SF 080 possible stone lamp handle.

## Glass (Appendix)

### Robin K Murdoch

This small assemblage of 88 shards from Tigh Caol is notable for its lack of diagnostic items. Most of the shards were small and lacked definitive shape. However, a certain amount of information could be gleaned from the assemblage without the normal level of dating accuracy associated with material from this period i.e. mid eighteenth to early nineteenth century. The assemblage appears to consist only of wine bottle fragments plus a few shards from drinking vessels.

Virtually all of the shards recovered were in excellent firebright condition indicating a neutral or acidic buried environment. For simplicity all the green bottle shards are described as coming from wine bottles although in reality some could have been for ale. The two were apparently very similar and difficult to tell apart. Usually when wine bottle shards are found there are lips and bases along with body shards and these are the diagnostic pieces which most help dating. However, at Tigh Caol there was only one lip (SF 094) and no bases, perhaps indicating that the larger broken pieces of glass may have been deliberately moved to a place of safety. Broken glass, children and livestock do not exist comfortably together. We also know

that glass batches for making wine bottles often included cullet (broken glass) and this may have been collected by the many itinerant souls who travelled the country vending their wares.

The colour of the wine bottle shards recovered was a fairly consistent dull, slightly olive green, which was common in the period from the mid-eighteenth century to the early nineteenth. Earlier bottles tended to be a paler green or a more vibrant colour. There were no shards of black glass, common in England from the beginning of the eighteenth century but not seen in Scotland till the early nineteenth. Several of the larger body shards had come from 'cylindrical' bottles with belling (slight swelling) just above the base. This feature is only seen on wine bottles made between c. 1740 and c. 1840. Wine bottles started to be made in semi-automatic moulding machines from 1821 onwards but it reasonable to allow till 1840 for the technology to spread. No shards were found with mould marks. The relatively small diameter of the cylindrical bottles is an indication of later eighteenth to early nineteenth century date (see Appendix).

All the diagnostic shards of drinking vessels indicated a probable mid- to later eighteenth century date. The folded foot (where the rim of the base is turned over to form a double thickness) can be seen in SF 041. This type of foot had generally been phased out around 1740 but slightly later examples are known (Bickerton 1972, 20). The domed foot SF 056 (rim missing) had an unfinished pontil scar where the vessel had been attached to an iron rod during manufacture. Around 1780 it became standard practice to grind off or fire smooth the pontil scars (ibid 21). The examples of slightly out turned rims from bell or trumpet bowls, SF 025 and SF 029, are also classic mid-eighteenth century forms.

Significantly there were no shards of window glass recovered, but this is not unusual for a rural structure of the period. There may still have been window apertures but these may have had shutters or been screened with cloth or oiled paper.

In summary, the glass from Tigh Caol represents a period from the second quarter of the eighteenth century to probably the very early nineteenth century. This does not necessarily mean that

the site was not occupied earlier. Glass did not become common, especially on lower status sites, until the period represented here. However, the theory that the building fell into disuse after Telford's new road of 1804-11 is supported by the glass finds. If the site was an inn more glass would have been expected to have been present, especially from the later eighteenth century. However, as already mentioned, broken glass may have been largely cleared, perhaps on a regular basis for safety or re-use.

## Metal

### Natasha Ferguson

Three metal objects found at the site are described and discussed in more detail here.

#### SF 007 a horse harness strap keeper

This object is a decorative metal band with an overall trapezoidal frame, measuring 32 mm in length by 12 mm in width by 15 mm in diameter. The object appears to be made from a lead alloy, such as pewter, as suggested by its dark grey colour and relatively heavy weight for its size, at 16 g. This is a well-made cast object with a decorative hour glass shape facing with sloped edges to add definition. The side panels, although plain, are finished with rounded edges and taper slightly at the base to produce the trapezoidal frame.

This object is in good condition with little surface corrosion, but oxidisation has darkened and dulled the original colour. There is a trace of wear on the inner edge of one of the panels indicating the keeper has been used, but perhaps not extensively.

This type of decorative keeper was normally used in pairs to keep the thick leather strap ends in place below the harness buckles. Such keepers were normally made of brass and nickel plated, but a polished pewter example may also provide the required silvery shine. The distinctive hour glass shape of the piece is synonymous with Scottish harnesses for heavy horses, in particular decorative harnesses for plough horses presented at shows from the mid-nineteenth century onwards (Keegan 1974, 134). There is a good example of one in use on a Clydesdale Horse Show Bridel in the care of the Highland Folk Museum dating to 1900.

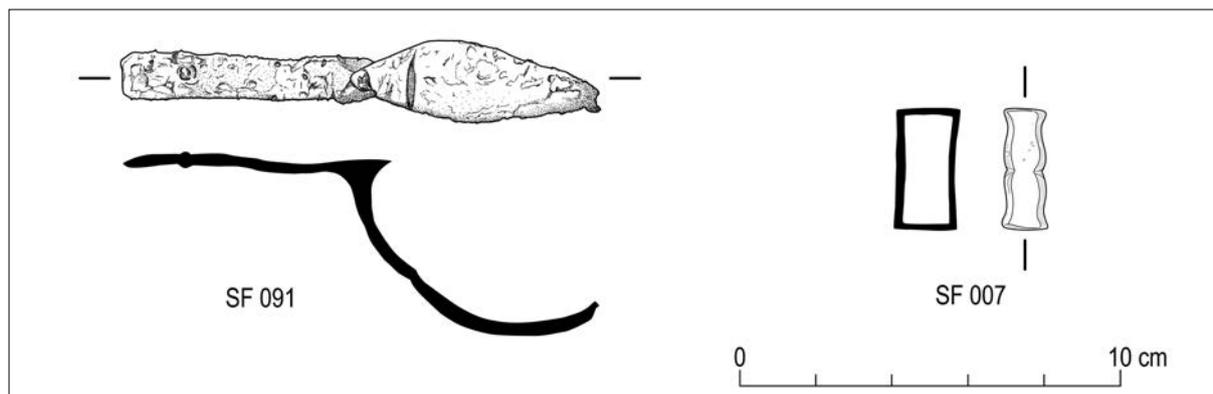


Figure 6: SF 091 trigger guard and SF 007 horse harness strap keeper.

### SF 091 Trigger guard

This copper alloy object measures 130 mm in length and 20 mm at its broadest point. There are two main elements of this object: a sub-rectangular strap, D-shape in section, with rounded ends and a small attachment pin. This connects seamlessly, and slightly overlaps, a funnel-shaped finial to a curved strap with a D-shaped section which broadens in the middle and then tapers again to another finial which has broken. The condition of the object is poor, with some surface loss due to corrosion and a crack running through the main section causing some structural weakness.

This object is a fragment of a trigger guard. The elongated shape of the guard suggests it was affixed to a musket or rifle, rather than a pistol. The decorative qualities and slim shape of the guard, such as the funnel-shaped finials also suggests a personal firearm, such as a fowling piece, rather than a military issue firearm which features more robust brass furniture. The sub-rectangular strap fastens the guard to the underside of the stock, as indicated by the pin. The length and shape of this strap suggests it is the rear attachment i.e. running along the underside of the stock rather than towards the barrel.

The slim shape and design of the trigger guard is consistent with firearms, in particular fowling pieces, dating to the eighteenth century and possibly into the early nineteenth century (Neal and Back 1984), although it has not been possible to find a direct comparison at this point.

### SF 095 Possible horseshoe fragment

This object is a flat and rounded iron fragment with a slight curve inwards and measuring 23 mm

in width. This appears to be a heel fragment from an iron horseshoe (Clark 1995). The broad flat shape of the piece is typical of horseshoes from the medieval period until the eighteenth century. Comparisons with horseshoes with similarly shaped heels may suggest a post-medieval date c. late seventeenth-eighteenth century (Egan 2005, 180).

### Discussion

The site of Tigh Caol lies in a naturally carved post-glacial era amphitheatre. This relatively sheltered site on the west edge of an unnamed burn (or at least one whose Gaelic name has been lost) had one main avenue of sight, towards the north along the drovers' road. The site was not readily visible when approaching from any direction until in close proximity. This setting for the inn would have offered a number of advantages including shelter, a readily available water source and passing trade on the drovers' road. The inconspicuous site could have also hidden away what may have been a place of unruly activity on occasion.

The flints, pottery and glass are suggestive of the inn being in use in the latter half of the eighteenth century and the coin was most likely to still be in circulation at this time. The key metal artefacts are also suggestive of a similar date range although the horseshoe may hint at the use of the droving route prior to the construction of Tigh Caol.

It is difficult to determine with any degree of certainty the position of the external doorway(s) in the building due to its rough construction and due to the fact that only the lower courses of stonework survive. However, there are two

potential doorway positions noted on the structure (Figure 2). One is on the south wall 5 m east of the south-west corner of the building; here there is a pair of large header stones which frame a gap of 0.85 m across the wall. This is the only position on the entire external wall where there are any header stones across the wall. Header stones are used to take the load of opposing sections of wall on either side of a structural weakness, such as a door or window. As the headers here are close to ground level a doorway is most likely. In addition to the positioning of the two headers, the most westerly stone shows heavy wear and a degree of polish on its eastern edge adding weight to the theory that this marks a point of access. This potential doorway would have gone out of use when the internal partition wall 004 was inserted. Another potential entrance was on the north wall central to the structure leading into the central hearth area. Here there was a particular concentration of quartz stones on the outer wall face. There was also a concentration of smaller stones across the wall and there was a rough surface external to the wall at this point leading to/from this potential doorway position.

The evidence for entrance change may be indicative of the long house changing to adapt its use as an inn. The entrance towards the south-west corner of the building would have been hidden from the view of drovers coming south-west along the route, whereas the north entrance was central and would have been in full view of those approaching. The partition wall for the creation of a new room in the western end of the building would have blocked off the south-west entrance leaving the north side of the building as the only possible entrance.

The function of the stone-built bench in the western room is uncertain but it could have functioned simply as a bench by the hearth, or perhaps a bed or working surface. However, it has been noted by Fenton and Mulhern (2012) that furniture such as "...chests were placed on stones and pieces of wood to protect them from moisture " raising the possibility that the feature could also have been a platform for a storage unit or chest.

There is evidence to suggest a possible window at the east gable end of the building, assuming

the lintel stone is not coincidentally part of the collapse here. There was no evidence of a hearth or doorway which would have also accounted for the presence of the lintel. The central hearth set roughly in an earth floor is typical in post-medieval long-houses in Scotland and was still common in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century (Fenton and Mulhern 2012).

In the trench across the supposed drovers' track position there were two dips in topography, indicative of a track or tracks extending parallel to the north beyond the trench for approximately 20 m before disappearing into the vegetation and the former meanders of the burn. There was also evidence of repair or consolidation in the form of the burnt birch logs, a sample of which was dated to 1216 - 1284 cal AD. This is not dissimilar to the corduroy method of constructing tracks over rough and/or wet ground, a method recorded as far back as the Neolithic (Brunner 2000) and still used today by both the military and the forestry industry (Murgatroyd and Saunders 2005).

## Conclusion

The investigations have provided an insight into the function of this building in the eighteenth century and confirmed the presence of a track leading to/from/past the building. The excavation can, however, also be seen as addressing much wider themes in relation to what was driving change in the Scottish Highlands before and during Improvement.

The evidence would seem to suggest that the building was not in operation much as an inn, if at all, before 1700, and ceased trading not long after 1800. As such, questions might be asked regarding why it was created and why it ceased to exist. This is especially the case as there is now definite evidence that it was adjacent to an ancient trackway. One possibility is that whilst the routeway had always seen the passage of travellers (and continued to do so), the much greater volumes of cattle using the route in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries prompted the creation of the inn. Evidence from Crieff and Falkirk Trysts (Haldane 1952) would suggest that there was a very substantial expansion in cattle trading over this period. Perhaps this made a business viable when cattle rested in increasing numbers in the natural bowl around the building, sheltered and well watered, as they recovered

from their ascent into the pass of the Caol Glen.

While the investigations at Tigh Caol revealed artefactual evidence of the function as an inn, together with confirmation of the existence of a nearby trackway, the project also revealed a wider chronological framework for this site. The dating of the possible corduroy track surface places this particular repair in the thirteenth century. There were several undated layers underlying this charred wood suggesting that this route could well have much older origins. The stone lamp recovered from the hearth area within Tigh Caol also hints at earlier beginnings for not only the route but also for the building. In researching a drovers' route and an associated inn, this project has discovered definite evidence of a previously only suspected ancient routeway. Although the route is easily termed as a drovers' road in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was likely to have been a highway for a long time before, from at least the thirteenth century, and in all probability well before that. The archaeological evidence also points to the route being used by far more than just drovers when Tigh Caol was trading as an inn in the eighteenth century. The range of quality in glass and pottery suggests use of the inn (and thus the route) by all social classes and for far wider purposes than just cattle droving.

A testament to the importance of this route across the high ground to the west coast of Argyll is the repeated improvements made to it: from a medieval track reinforced with birch corduroy, to the drovers' route noted for repairs in the eighteenth century, to Telford's road in the early nineteenth century and the eventual A886 in the latter part of the twentieth century. Telford's road improved the route to such an extent that it may have triggered the demise of Tigh Caol inn. The new improved road not only physically detached the route from Tigh Caol but also reduced the need to stop on what was a faster route to market increasingly used by waggons and carriages. This is a scenario all too familiar today in our modern road systems, with bypasses being built around smaller communities in order to get to a main destination elsewhere more quickly and thus cutting off trade for that settlement.

Consequently, it might be argued that market forces, far removed from the Scottish Highlands,

created a growing demand for cattle; and hence a greatly increased volume of cattle droves moving past the site; and thus an attractive proposition for someone to create the inn at Tigh Caol, at some point after 1700. Equally it could be held that external forces, in this case the activities of the Commissioners for Highland Roads and Bridges, removed the need for an inn at this location by the construction of a new road, and as a result the building became ruinous in the nineteenth century. Its demise would then relate directly to the growing power and influence of central government in the Scottish Highlands.

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## Appendix: Catalogue of glass finds

Abbreviations: *WB* – Wine bottle

*DV* – Drinking vessel

| SF | Description   |
|----|---|
| 1  | Shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century   |
| 2  | Neck shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 3  | Body shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 4  | Shoulder shard WB, probably early nineteenth century  |
| 5  | Small body shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 8  | Small neck shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 10 | Body shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 11 | Shoulder shard with springing of neck WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century   |
| 12 | Small shoulder shard WB, slight dulling, probably late eighteenth century   |
| 13 | Small neck shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 15 | Two body shards WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century   |
| 17 | Shoulder shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 18 | Tiny clear shard, probable DV, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 19 | Lower body shard WB, belling, 'orange peel' effect, orig diameter <90 mm, late eighteenth – early nineteenth century                              |
| 21 | Small body shard WB, some corrosion, mid eighteenth century?  |
| 24 | Lower body shard WB, some corrosion, possibly first half eighteenth century   |
| 25 | DV rim in clear, orig bowl, diameter c. 60 mm, bowl profile probably bell or trumpet, mid eighteenth century                                      |
| 26 | Small shatter shard WB? mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century   |
| 27 | Neck shard WB, slight corrosion, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 28 | Thickish lower body shard WB, slight internal corrosion, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 29 | Small DV rim shard in clear, similar profile to SF 025, mid eighteenth century  |
| 30 | Three body shards WB, possibly same bottle, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century   |
| 31 | Body shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 32 | Two shards WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 34 | Body shard WB? thin blown, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 35 | Tiny clear shard  |
| 38 | Lower body shard WB, possibly over 110 mm diameter, mid eighteenth century?   |
| 41 | Part foot from DV (stemmed), orig diameter c. 63 mm, folded foot, mid eighteenth century  |
| 42 | Tiny probable bottle shard  |
| 43 | Shatter shard WB?   |
| 44 | Four shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 45 | Two shards WB, some 'orange peel' effect, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century   |
| 46 | Tiny shard clear glass  |
| 47 | Small shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century   |
| 48 | Three shards neck WB, probably second half eighteenth century   |
| 49 | Shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century   |
| 50 | Body shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 51 | Three shards WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 52 | Shard lower body WB, belling, some 'orange peel' orig diameter c. 90 mm, late eighteenth – early nineteenth century                               |
| 53 | Two shards WB, one part shoulder, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century   |
| 54 | Two small shards WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 55 | Small shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century   |
| 56 | Part of domed foot from DV (stemmed), unfinished pontil scar underneath, springing of stem above, pre c. 1780 and probably mid eighteenth century |
| 58 | Shoulder shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 59 | Tiny shard clear  |
| 60 | Small shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century   |
| 65 | Small body shard WB, quite seedy, possibly mid eighteenth century   |
| 69 | Small shard clear glass   |
| 74 | Body shard WB, belling, orig diameter <90 mm, late eighteenth century   |

| SF  | Description  |
|-----|--|
| 75  | Body shard WB, belling, late eighteenth century  |
| 76  | Shoulder shard WB, mid eighteenth- early nineteenth century  |
| 77  | Body shard WB, orig diameter c. 90 mm, late eighteenth century                                       |
| 78  | Shoulder shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century   |
| 79  | Shoulder shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century   |
| 81  | Small shard clear glass  |
| 83  | Very small shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century                                       |
| 88  | Two body shards WB, slight belling, orig diameter <90 mm, late eighteenth – early nineteenth century |
| 92  | Neck shard WB, Late eighteenth century   |
| 94  | Shard neck and part lip WB, pre c.1760 and possibly late first half eighteenth century               |
| 96  | Three body shards WB, belling, original diameter c. 95mm, possibly same bottle as SF 094             |
| 97  | Body shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century   |
| 99  | Small shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 100 | Tiny shard rim clear from DV, probably mid eighteenth century  |
| 105 | Small shardWB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century   |
| 106 | Body shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century   |
| 108 | Small shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 112 | Shard Neck WB, late eighteenth century   |
| 114 | Shoulder shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century   |
| 118 | Shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century  |
| 119 | Tiny shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century   |
| 121 | Body shard WB, mid eighteenth – early nineteenth century   |

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